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THE RATIONAL GROUNDS
OF THEISM

HENRY C. MABIE



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THE SOLVING
OF THE WORLD-RIDDLE
OR
THE RATIONAL GROUNDS
OF THEISM

(THE METAPHYSICS OF THE SUBJECT
CLARIFIED, AND IN A NUTSHELL)

BY
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No. 1.

FOREWORD

THE writer's duties during several years have led him into wide and varied contact with students, in both the home and foreign lands. He has been under the necessity of discussing the Christian doctrine of God and the moral order, especially as underlying vital conceptions of Christian Missions.

He has, however, found among students widely, a lamentable lack of elementary grounding in any clear doctrine of the human soul, the chief basis for theism. This situation is in strong contrast to that existing a generation ago. Doubtless the altered emphasis is due to the larger place assumed since Darwin by the Physical Sciences, as opposed to the more abstract and metaphysical ideas of an earlier time. The wide prevalence, moreover, of elective courses in college have lured students to their disadvantage from the more difficult work.

Great libraries indeed abound in psychological and philosophical works, yet they are so voluminous with historical and discursive matter that it is disheartening to the average undergraduate to attempt to compass them. Besides, Metaphysics as a science has within a few years undergone great changes, and so many works once famous have become out-dated.

The need, therefore, of a simple, up-to-date epitome of the subject, embracing a view which

presents a minimum of difficulties, seems to be much needed. Such a view in the mind of the writer is afforded by some form of what is called Objective Idealism.

If it is objected that there is no need of a reasoned doctrine of God, inasmuch as the whole matter is intuitional, I reply, even so; for the child-like and the simple-hearted. But those who are ensnared by the sophistications of Naturalism do need to be shown the grounds for better conclusions. Just that this little booklet tries to furnish.

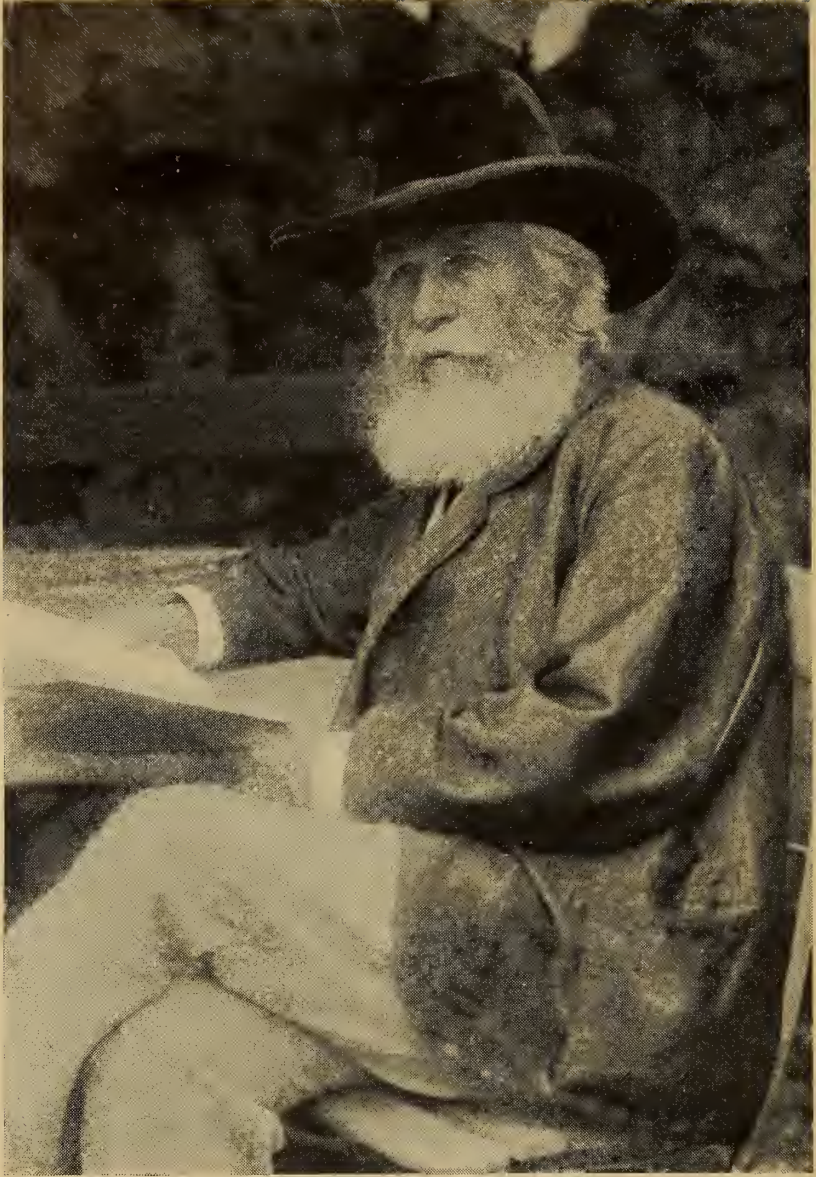
The positions herein stated make no claim to originality, except in the simplified form of statement. The positions themselves are substantially those of the late Prof. Borden P. Bowne of Boston University, and corroborated by kindred thinkers like Dr. A. H. Strong, Profs. Rudolf Eucken, J. W. Buckham, J. H. Snowden, and many others. The writer was called for a brief season to deal with the questions involved, with a class of "electives" in Rochester Theological Seminary, at the earnest solicitation of President-Emeritus Augustus H. Strong, D.D., LL.D. The line of work proved so intellectually stimulating, and so assuring to theistic faith, that the subject has been pursued ever since, and especially while resident in Germany, and in further preparation to deal in later travels in Asia with typical forms of the Oriental mind. For such values as are embraced in the studies themselves, they are now committed to the public, in this form.

HENRY C. MABIE.

BOSTON, March 1, 1915.

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PROFESSOR ERNEST HAECKEL

THE RATIONAL GROUNDS OF THEISM

I

THE ISSUE STATED

ON an evening in August, 1913, the writer, accompanied by Professor Rudolf Eucken, was privileged to meet two other distinguished professors in Jena, Germany, namely, Ernest Haeckel and his successor as president of the German Monistic Society, Wilhelm Ostwald, of Leipzig. As we were ushered into Haeckel's library, he jocosely inquired, "Aren't you afraid to come into this den of lions? We have the reputation here of being dreadful infidels."

I replied, "I have no particular sense of fear. I am looking for the lions of Jena, and so, under the protecting ægis of Professor Eucken, I am here."

Then came another query, "What do you think of this scheme of things [meaning the universe], of which we are a part?"

I answered, "Well, I am not here for controversy, but your question is a straight one, and it is entitled to a straight answer. I reckon there is a Thinker behind it all."

He responded, "Perhaps."

I answered, "Why say 'perhaps'? That is certain."

He added, "What makes you so confident?"

"Your own basis as a scientist."

He asked, "How so?"

I replied, "Because all science as well as philosophy or theology cannot advance at all without postulating certain primary truths, intuitions, or axioms, deeper than formal proof, in order to find a standing in reason from which to work out any system."

And I added, "Doubtless you believe in the science of astronomy, among other sciences."

"Certainly."

"But is not astronomy mainly based on mathematical axioms or other strictly psychological data?"

"Probably."

"Are all mathematical axioms the deliverances of rationality?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And who is the real astronomer, say a Kepler or Copernicus, but one who has thought the process of the stellar universe over again on its plan?"

(With hesitation) "Probably."

"Then is not he who brought into being the astral worlds, at least a mathematician, and if so, a thinker?"

To this the agnostic author of *The Riddle of the Universe* made no reply, if he had one.

When asked if a framed picture of two mammoth apes hanging on the wall of the room were his ancestors, the real "missing links," he smilingly nodded assent.

I then asked, "Whence came they?"

"Oh," he replied, "from the egg."

“ Indeed! But who laid the egg? ”

He changed the subject, and began to inquire about immortality and wondered if I believed in it.

By this time it was Eucken's turn to come in for some criticism respecting his idealism. This waked the philosopher up, and he warmed eloquently to his replies. In winding up his colloquy, Eucken did not hesitate to intimate that these naturalists were very dogmatic, and that “ without grounds either in science or philosophy,” in their fundamental assumptions of certainty.

Thus in most concrete form the issue implied in this discussion received concrete illustration. Our universe is either a product of thought, or it is a self-wrought evolution of matter.

Accordingly, two very widely different attempts on the part of thinkers to explain our universe — and this is all that philosophy really means — have contended for mastery during the past two hundred years. The one starts from the particle of matter. It assumes that every thing in the universe, including all that is in man — mind, heart, conscience, and will — and even all that is contained in ideas of God can be accounted for by the mere developments of matter. This view is the materialistic. True, this view as a philosophy has long been widely repudiated — even Haeckel in Germany being now a lone figure. Survivals of the theory, or implications of it, however, still widely abound, and they work great havoc in thought and religion.

The other method of world explanation starts with the self-conscious, personal soul, as necessarily

assumed by consciousness, incapable of proof and needing none. This is the idealistic view, and affords the intellectual basis for any real belief in God. Its fundamental position is that spirit rather than matter is first, and that everything in the universe, material and spiritual, has originated in the idealizing creative mind of God — a mind with which our own human minds are homogeneous. There is no such thing in the world as mere static “thinghood,” “pure being,” existing in and of itself, apart from the Creator’s thought (sin and wilful perversion excepted).

The notion that the so-called *ontological argument*, on which the validity of the *cosmological* and the *design arguments* also depends, constituting proof, was long ago adjudged to be inadequate. The highest argument for God does not amount to a demonstration. It rests on the assumed existence of a timeless, absolute, perfect being — an assumption, however, which if lived upon affords ever-increasing assurance. If theistic faith thus based is groundless, however, all our mental life is no less untrustworthy. Without some assumption we can have no dependable theory of anything. We may, however, be assured that if our theism is by nothing absolutely proved, it is nevertheless implied in everything: This is because there is an intuitional element in us deeper than formal proof. Where we cannot demonstrate, we proceed upon the practical postulate that has the fewest difficulties. At that point we exercise faith, and we exercise our wills. Our deepest beliefs are formations and experiences of our total life, rather than

mere inferences from logic, — the mere formal regulative faculties, — never so deep as life itself. Theism is the fundamental postulate of our deepest and most composite life. An assumption, indeed, underlies it, but without it we wreck all our mental and certainly our moral interests. Our cognitive and speculative faculties are so bound up with theism as to stand or fall with it.

Of course both theism and atheism (politely termed agnosticism) are, to begin with, hypothetical assumptions. The proof of either is only really worked out through subsequent tests of life and moral action, and such proof is ever a growing one in the direction where the truth lies, namely, in theism.

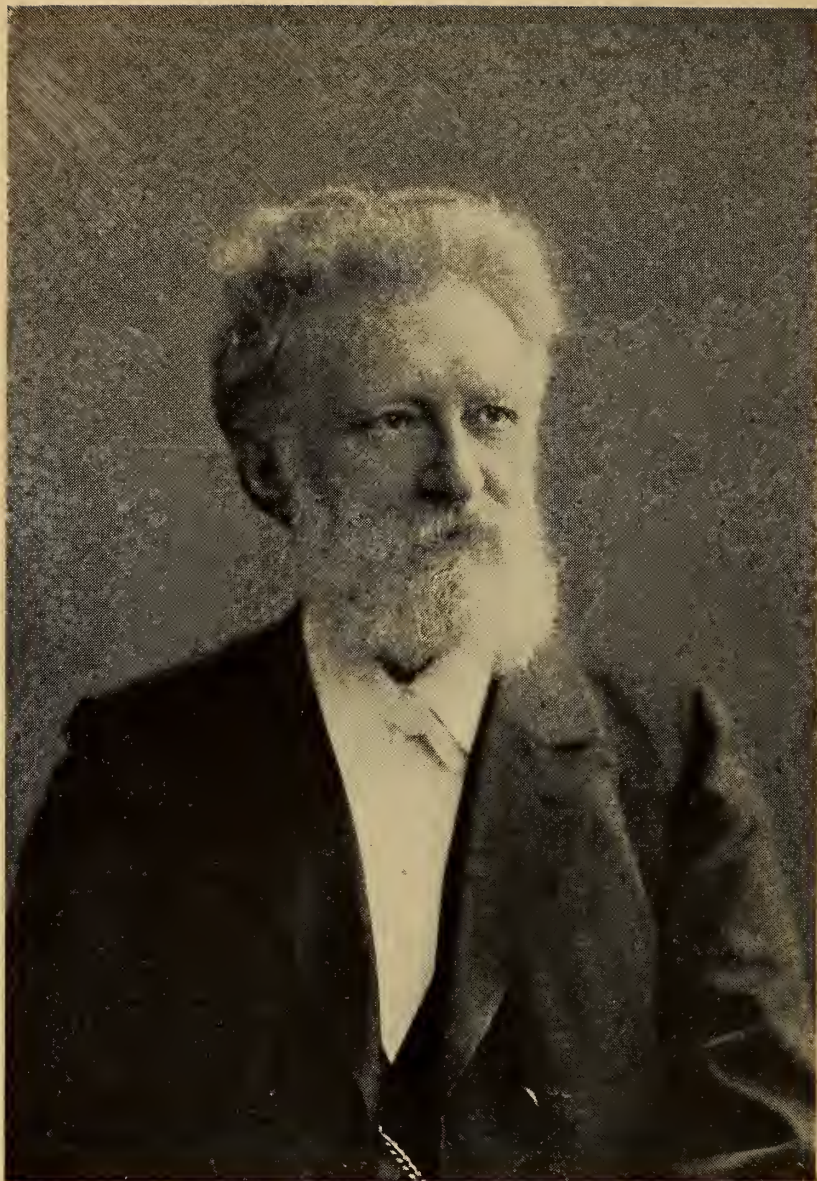
A study of the matter involved in the two theories stated implies some distinctions in metaphysics. It is the only thorough way. But let us not be frightened at a mere term. All normal minds are metaphysical, *i. e.*, more than physical, if they are rational. The important thing is, that the metaphysics be sound rather than unsound. The only way to avoid metaphysics is to become demented. Then let us dismiss the old libel that all metaphysics is "the search of a blind man in a dark room for a black cat that is not there." We grant that a process of mere intellect apart from moral action cannot afford *experience* of God, but it may lead the way to it.

The most fruitful source of mischief in this whole realm is the assumption sometimes taken on by science to be a philosophy, whereas the ends served by these two departments of inquiry are entirely

different, yet in no necessary conflict with each other. The function of science is to observe, register, and classify phenomena at the most as mere antecedents and consequents in a series. Philosophy goes further, and seeks for causes that really explain, rather than historically describe. Science has not one word to say respecting causes, — that dynamic something which is beneath the surface. If it assumes to do this it becomes neither science nor philosophy, albeit it is here often most dogmatic.

It is in the hope of clarifying somewhat this involved matter, and because many whom I meet in wide circles need it and are even eager for it, that I have ventured to prepare this brief treatise particularly for the use of students.

The positions stated and commended will be those of what is termed "Objective Idealism." In the statement no particular claim will be made to originality, except in the effort to simplify. The positions themselves are substantially those of many thinkers and writers like those referred to in the Foreword and in Chapter V.



PROFESSOR RUDOLF EUCKEN

II

THE NATURALISTIC THEORY

THE main thesis of this form of world-explanation is that what we call spiritual process, whether in mental or moral action, is a mere *continuation of* rather than *analogous to* natural process expressed in the material world,* — mere material force working itself up to the higher level.

This natural process is assumed to have a basis in existence entirely *independent of* spiritual dynamic or form of thought-energy in the universe. This natural independent existence as grounded in molecules and atoms, and operating through indwelling laws, is deemed sufficient unto itself. It works itself by mechanical interactions. It is this assumption that has wrought so great injury to fundamental faith and religion. I note a few instances or applications claimed for this method of activity in our universe.

First. It is assumed and frequently stated in the philosophy of Herbert Spencer that the main element in life is "the adjustment of existence to environment." This matter is taken up by Dr. John T. Gulick, of Honolulu, eminent both as scientist and missionary, in an article entitled "False Biology and Fatalism," and published in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April, 1908. Gulick herein

*It was at this point that Henry Drummond probably erred in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, as some of his Scottish critics pointed out, a verdict which Drummond later practically accepted.

opposes Spencer's denial of the freedom of the will, which with him rests on the biological assumption that all vital activities are predetermined by activities in the environment. Gulick proceeds to show that changes in the so-called natural selections are as really and as often begun and maintained through changes in the *vital organism* as they are in part also affected by environment. Gulick also points out that while external nature may furnish the means or occasion, the real cause lies vastly deeper.

It is the frequent mistake of scientists when they turn philosophers to mistake mere phenomenal antecedents for the real cause. The problem of life, however, involves a deep and reverent inquiry into the vital dynamic, placed there by the purpose and will of the Creator.

A second error rooted in naturalism underlies the crass socialism so radically threatening the order and stability of fundamental institutions like the family, the church, the nation, and normal international relationships. According to this theory, social order is founded neither in the soul of man nor in the being of God, but has for its uniting bond only the *agreement* of a social contract. For social purposes it is expedient to agree, and so social contract arises, whether for the State or for any other institution. But all is left without any inner controlling principle or sanction as found in God or man. The unity thus arising is but the sum of its social fragments. The sole driving power is individual self-assertion, its aim mere utility, self-interest "functioning" — a vague term now much in fashion. The combined selfishness backed

by will secures the good of society. Yet, strangely, this system is marked and controlled by the most dogmatic individualism. It makes no claims to true personality, human or divine, or to any sanctions outside arbitrary will, or a sum of wills. It is psychology without a soul. Hence how enormously important that those who justly feel compelled to emphasize the social corollaries of Christianity should carefully avoid tacit or apparent justification of the radical falsities of the socialistic propaganda as such.

A third practical matter of vast moment as grounded in the naturalistic theory is the denial of freedom or spiritual initiative. Building on the idea that so-called natural process has a true independence, sense impressions of outward circumstance alone are deemed sufficient to account for any kind of initiative. Freedom is thus resolved into a mechanical determinism, of late so much in fashion in certain supposedly philosophical circles. Now put over against this the protest of that foremost physicist, Sir Oliver Lodge, when he says, "The universe is not a machine subject only to outside forces, but a living organism with initiatives of its own." He inveighs against "the modern superstition that the universe is so suffused with law and order that it contains nothing personal, nothing indeterminate," and adds, "The Creator of free creatures desires that men shall do right, not because they *must*, but because they *will*; that is the divine problem, and his highest problem—the highest problem of which we have any conception."

A fourth matter, corollary of naturalism, is the

doctrine that "might makes right"—the right to work out self-will by sheer force, as against the rights of others. This idea has an especially iniquitous manifestation just now in the brutal warfare of Europe, and in such brigandage as moves a strong nation to trample upon the weak. Whenever a nation in disdain or contempt of moral law and all equities in the case seizes territory by arrogance or force it commits this crime. When any monopolistic corporation goes to all lengths to have its own way, even assuming, as it sometimes does, to create a providence for others, it is equally without sanction in the nature either of God or man. Such policy invariably falls back on Darwinian evolution and its Godless doctrine, "the survival of the fittest," never once asking whether itself was ever fit to *arrive*; and, if not, on what grounds should it ever presume to survive? All corporate organization, as really as the individual, is under moral law, despite Bernhardt's dictum that international law is a delusion.

If the right claimed be that of autocracy, of an unprincipled majority or of the anarchistic mob,—whichever can command the power, it is all alike Godless and hellish. The policy of Nebuchadnezzar, Nero, Tamerlane, or the devil could be justified and upheld on precisely the same grounds. The doctrine is essentially materialistic and atheistic.

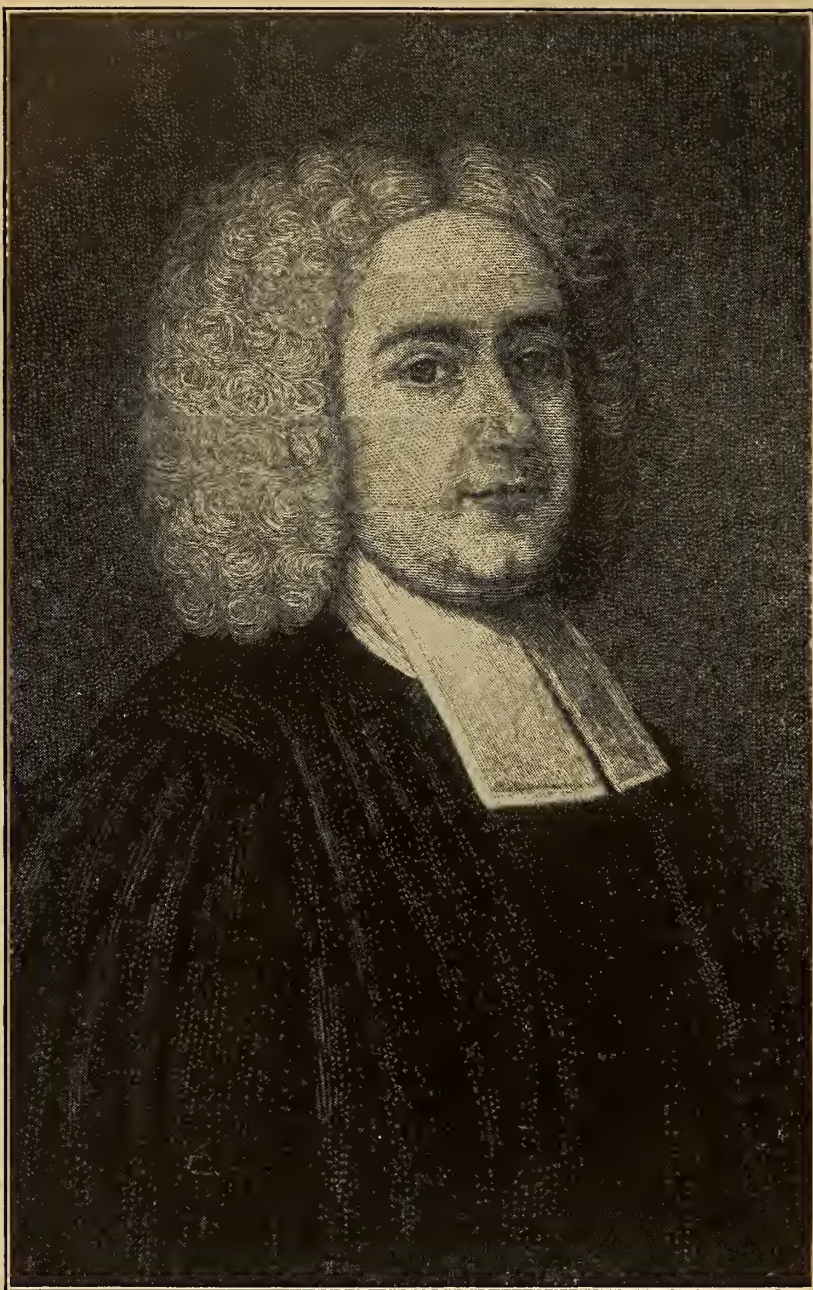
Another corollary of this naturalistic doctrine is that all religion is but some sort of primitive, atomic, self-caused process of gradual transformation of some abstract imagined entity or other. This may have arisen and been developed by a

gradual emergence from animalism, through heredity, climatic or other external conditions — anything so long as accountability is evaded. All religions, therefore, are co-ordinate, equally good, or good for nothing, as one's taste dictates. The idea that any of them — even the one embodied in Christ — is absolute and final, entitled to ultimate and universal sway, is utterly disputed. Even Eucken, who particularly among present-day writers has pointed out the defects and downright errors of naturalism — in fact, this summary of naturalistic principles is substantially Eucken's own — strangely and inconsistently contends against biblical Christianity being considered as "the one and only true religion." By the processes above outlined, nature as God created and viewed it is, to use Eucken's own language, "dehumanized, vanquished by the very nature which man has so brought under scientific control." That man is indeed first a servant of nature, and afterwards its ruler, is, to be sure, a paradox; but paradoxes abound in any true religion. Of this whole realm — the paradoxical — however, a naturalistic philosophy superciliously takes no cognizance. Mere mental speculation, particularly "the natural mind," cannot entertain the deeper truth of an apparent contradiction involved in the paradox. It is only by living this sort of truth that its harmony is discovered; and the natural mind is far from the intention of living in the humble way necessary to the realization of such truth. Hence it is that mere opinion apart from life is empty for religion.

It should be added that this naturalism has

no theory of knowledge, no criteria for truth; in short, no metaphysics. It confines itself blindly to mere induction, but the half-process at best, and it ignores all deduction — that prerogative of basal reason — or the findings of the self-conscious intuitive soul; and thus it becomes philosophically inane.





BISHOP GEORGE BERKELEY

III

BERKELEY'S ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

THE first to propound Idealism as an absolute system was Bishop George Berkeley, of Ireland. His theory was brought out in what was called *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, published in 1710. His object was to oppose the materialism and skepticism of his age. He argued his case on the ground that the phenomena of sense in an act of perceiving objects are best explained by supposing a continuous act of deity as imposing these objects upon the mind in a dramatic way, as if for our wonder and entertainment in a play. This was his notion of perception. In the interests of his argument he went so far as to deny the reality of the external world altogether; in his thought there is only a set of mental images.

Berkeley was long ridiculed as an idle dreamer, but later opinion has accorded to him a subtlety of mind both penetrating and prophetic. His reflections have been repeatedly taken up and worked over, even by the most astute, philosophical minds, including Immanuel Kant's, and clarified of confusions while retaining the residuum of value. He made one real and important discovery, namely, that the objects we experience as known in our minds are not merely *dead copies* of things, photographed on the mind as on a sensitized plate by sense-impression, as at first sight they appear to be, and as has been generally claimed by realistic

philosophers. The relation concerning the *primary place* in an experience of knowledge, as between the subject mind which knows and the object contemplated, is *inverted*, as opposed to that which at first thought appears; that is, the mind itself (yet as in some way empowered by deity), rather than the external object, is really the primary agent.

Berkeley, moreover, saw that this subject mind, through its own rational, native powers, *fuses or combines* the external object seen by its own rationality into a new unity. He did not quite bring out, as Kant did afterwards, that the mind does this because of its own active, ontological, causal nature as mind, but his suggestion was the fertilizing element in Kant's later view. Berkeley further contended that it is the mind itself, also, that casts these external objects into forms called spatial or "extended." He certainly—at least implied by these reasonings that the rational mind of man is akin to the supremely real, divine, and eternal mind: "Thou has set eternity in their heart." (Eccl. 3 : 11.)

Berkeley erred, however,—egregiously erred,—in conceiving our ideas as arbitrarily imposed upon us by the Creator in a dramatic way. The truth rather is that these experiences of knowledge grasped in our ideas are something previously rooted in the very nature of the Creator, but rewritten in our nature as homogeneous with God's own. The world manifested in us is the world which God himself experiences as his own blessed activity and joy, and as intended to be linked with and enjoyed by our mundane thought

and activity. It is the modern discernment of this that has led to the new and strong emphasis on the immanence of God. This, indeed, is not the whole truth, for God is also transcendent over his universe and above it as well as immanent in it. Berkeley was right in holding to the *molding energy* of rational human life in an experience of knowledge; but he failed to see that our human idealizing energy, while integrally connected with God's own, other than dramatically, is yet dependent on the deeper reality in him. He did see that there is a *constitutional relatedness* of man's mind to the creative mind, in whom "all things consist," or cohere.

Berkeley was in error also at one other crucial point, namely this: he denied, as the Christian Scientists of our own day also do, the reality in any sense not illusory of world-objects that lie outside the human mind.

By a truer idealism it is now held that the *external object*, as well as the subject mind, is also a factor in an experience of knowledge. It is that to which the knowing subject mind has reference as objective to itself in knowing anything outside of the mind itself. If idealism really ends where Berkeley left it, it becomes an impossible philosophy.

The fundamental reality Berkeley did not really and clearly bring out, but respecting which he pointed the way, was this idealizing being of God as the world-ground of which the idealizing mind of man, relative though it be, is yet of the same species with God's own and dependent on it.

This Creator has written the realities of the uni-

verse in our very constitution. We know these but in part, yet we know them as they are in their basal reality, through faculties that are rationally trustworthy, as far as they reach. Man is thus intended to be constitutionally not a skeptic, but a believer. This was a result of immense worth as a basis for theism. Berkeley thus led the way to a profound opposition to any even quasi-reasoned agnosticism, and theistic thought ever since has been greatly indebted to him.



MONUMENT TO KANT IN KÖNIGSBERG

IV

IMMANUEL KANT'S IDEALISM

ANOTHER type of idealism was born a century later in the great work of Immanuel Kant, who revised and improved upon Berkeley.

From Spinoza to Kant the great question was, "Has man as rational any ideas necessarily true or trustworthy?" Many thinkers said, "No." Locke contended that we have only sensations. Hume went even further and denied that we have any valid knowledge from any source. He thus argued for a universal skepticism. These discussions in Great Britain woke up Kant in Königsberg, Germany, leading him to a period of twelve years of intense reflection, out of which came two epoch-making works, *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of the Practical Reason*. Both works were cast into final form in five months.

Kant held in opposition to the sense-metaphysics, and in the main with Berkeley, that the subject mind, instead of being passive, is *active*, and *organically constitutive* of things as known. He opposed Locke, insisting that we have innate, *a priori* ideas, independent of sensation. He opposed Hume, contending that we have ideas necessary and universal, something more than mere habit. Against Hume's contention that the understanding is treacherous, Kant replied, "It is not naturally treacherous, but limited."

Thus far Kant was on solid ground, holding that

the mind as rational is active, and, if so, of course *free*; that it always *contributes something* to the object cognized; that the object as really known is the result of a union of the mind and the object external to it. This product is "phenomenal knowledge" as distinguished from that absolute knowledge which God has. Thus far Kant was constructive, and it was this positive position that chiefly made him "the father of modern philosophy." Had he continued to hold consistently to this, his contribution would have been wholesome and of vast worth. His doctrine of "phenomenal knowledge," however, was in error at a critical point. He held that by "phenomenal knowledge" we are to understand mere phantoms or illusions, which *mask* backlying realities. These he called "*noumena*," or certain imaginary realities that can never be known "as they are in themselves." Now, had he meant that we know things as "phenomenal" in the sense that they are *real for finite knowledge only*, his dictum would have stood. The cause of his error here was his mistaken interpretation of those formal, but immanent, and commonly unconscious, laws of thought native to the mind, called "categories," always employed, though unconsciously, in a rational knowing act.

Let me illustrate the meaning of a category, a somewhat obscure matter. When a mother divides an apple between her children there is implied a relation in *quantity* of a part to the whole; the quantity relation is the category involved in the mother's understanding of her dividing act. When a host at a Thanksgiving dinner having carved the

bird inquires of his guest "light or dark meat," the category of *quality* is implied in the consciousness of both host and guest. When one arrives at a train early or late to meet an engagement the implied *time relation* is the category that bears on the comfort or discomfort of his experience. It is this rather subconscious matter of relationships peculiar to normal mentality that is involved in the category. This definition, therefore, is deduced: A category is an immanent mental principle implied in one's definite, concrete experience, as the principle affects the understanding. Category, though unobserved, enters in whenever one *fixes*, *defines*, or *rationally relates* any object of thought to the mind. The categories are all implied in their totality from the start in the very idea of rationality but are never to be thought of as in use except in a particular, concrete mental action. Without them there is only abstractness or imbecility.

But Kant went astray here at two points: First, He so misconceived the nature of the category or formal law of thought as to mistake its essential function. It is true that a mental act of knowledge always implies every rational category as resident in the self-conscious mind which has the experience. The mind as "active" in Kant's notion of it, in order to contribute anything to an experience of knowledge, unconsciously carries with it all the categories employed in mental operation; the true rational *ego*, in order to be an *ego*, implies this. Kant, however, slipped into the error of conceiving the categories as having an existence as *real* and *independent* as the *ego* itself.

But this is not true; the category is *implicit* in the *ego* — never independent of it, much less external to it.

Kant at this point virtually *decomposed* his *ego*, on the one hand, and set up an *imaginary dominance* over it on the other. A category has no existence as a function for thought apart from *a definite, concrete act* of the intelligence which employs it; the moment a category is conceived as outside the *ego*, as independent of it, it is a mere abstraction and becomes nothing as affecting mentality.

The categories never *use* the intellect, or the *ego*, nor can the *ego* be understood through the categories. On the other hand, the categories are *understood*, and thus only, through a concrete living experience of the intellect in its entirety. This intelligence is not subject to any laws outside itself or beyond itself. It simply "accepts itself," by an act of consciousness, as "its own and only standard." This *true self* with its implied categories — this free, active intelligence — is the only thing within us wherewith to understand anything whatever.

Hence, when Kant implied that these categories could of themselves as *independent entities* return upon the *ego* so as to become *agents of illusioning* the mind, and thus to distort the validity of its action, he was in absolute error. He made the abstract category (something merely so imagined) *more determinative* for an act of intelligence than the *ego* itself in its integrity. He "split the mind," nullified the *ego*, and thus lost his Archimedean point as basis for any kind of knowledge. So

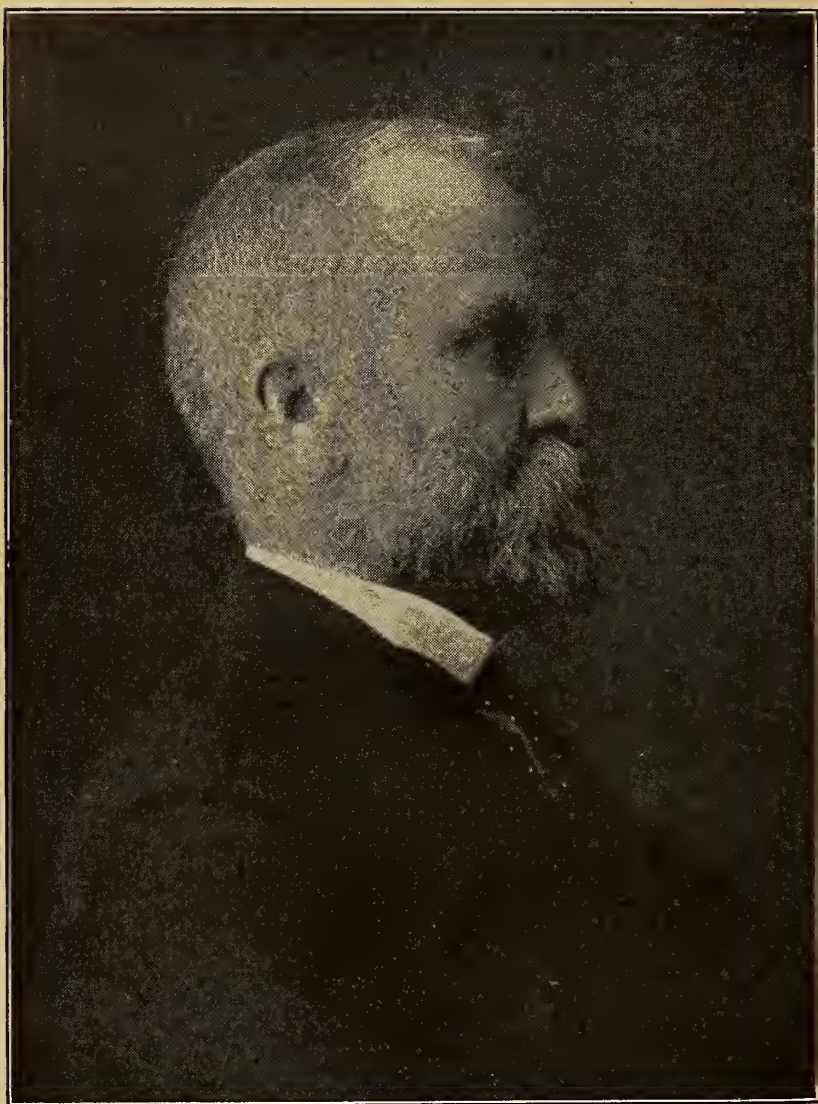
non-Kantian a philosopher and idealist as Eucken retains as starting point in his system for thought what he terms "the independent spiritual life," something immanent in man, transcendent in God, with cosmic and eternal relations; and he never falls into Kant's emasculation of the self thus conceived. Eucken, like Bowne, thus conserves his *ego*.

Then, secondly, when Kant conceived of this mind as active, with its implicit laws of thought passing over to unite with an external object in order to know that object, he wrongly inferred that the influence of the element of sense-impression (which is united with the mind in an experience of knowledge) so further acted on the *ego* as to *derange* that experience, despite all that was supposed to be resident in the *ego*. Thus resulted Kant's famous doctrine of "The Relativity of Human Knowledge"—a knowledge in nowise reliable. Kant's practical error was in supposing that these categories as abstractions so distorted the mind itself as compelled it to *misunderstand*. Having first lost his *ego*, and, secondly, the *validity of his composite experience* obtained by the union of the outward sense-impression with that *ego*, Kant could never thereafter, through any amount of reasoning backward from his conception of a category, find ground for the validity of his knowledge of any reality whatever, as "it is in itself." Kant thus logically fell back into Hume's skepticism.

He strove, indeed, to make good his defect for morals in another way. He wrote his *Practical Reason*, and found in the realm of man's moral

nature the sense of duty, his "categorical imperative." But he reached this result wholly at the loss of the capacity of his previously assumed knowing subject.

Accordingly, despite Kant's original and great service in showing that the mind is active, free, and constitutive, he unfortunately furnished ground for the philosophical agnosticism of the last century. Building on his error also, the prevalent Subjective Idealism through Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel arose, and it has lain at the root of much of the widespread and destructive skepticism of Germany. And this has mischievously affected much religious thought. Ritschl in large part built on Kant's agnostic foundation, and in so far implied a false metaphysic although disclaiming metaphysics altogether. It resulted in the committal of rational *hara-kiri*.



PROFESSOR BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

V

THE LATER OBJECTIVE IDEALISM

WITHIN a century, particularly since the period of Lotze in Göttingen, many revisions of Kant have been made and published—more than two hundred in Germany alone. A more defensible type of idealism has come in. Some essential elements of the Scottish Realism have been preserved, with a deeper insight into causal reality, while the primacy of the soul's active inner life has more and more grown on the reflective mind. The extreme positions of Berkeley have been displaced, and the destructive negations of Kant have been left behind. It is now seen that any tenable idealism rests not upon the mere act of perception, as Kant supposed, but upon an *analysis* of the product of perception.

This involves, as Bowne saw, an *interpretation* of the significance of those "laws of formal thought"—the so-called "categories" described in the previous chapter. Kant here was, as Bowne says, "on right lines, but he did not think through, to a sound conclusion." Most of our objective knowledge is explained knowledge, is an interpretation.

In our time leading interpreters put the main emphasis on personality. Indeed, this now is the central word in philosophy. It characterizes the writings of the following among many others: Professor Ward and the late Dr. Martineau, of

England; Professors Ladd and Sneath, of Yale; Professor Wenley, of Michigan; Professors Howison and Buckham, of California; Professor Watson, of Canada; Dr. A. H. Strong, of Rochester; Professor Snowden, of Allegany; Professor Palmer, of Harvard. Doubtless Professors Royce and William James, and even Von Münsterberg might also be claimed. But among the foremost stand the late Professor Borden P. Bowne, of Boston University, and Professor Eucken, of Jena, who are peculiarly *en rapport* with each other's thought, although Eucken's theological positions, as indicated by some of his later religious presentations, are to my mind sadly astray.

The positions of Objective Idealism include the following principles:

1. The *integrity* of the self-conscious *ego*, as the starting point in all thinking on any subject, even physical science, needing no proof and susceptible of none. The mind is not atomic. Thought is an *organic activity*, and not something put together mechanically from without. It builds up its own world of knowledge. Bowne calls his system *Personalism*; Eucken calls his, *Activism*.

2. The school maintains with Kant that the mind as rational always *contributes something* to the object cognized in an experience of knowledge. The thing really known in such an experience Bowne calls "a reconstruct," because it is a *composite* product of the subject mind and the object contemplated. Yet the knowing mind is primary.

3. This view recognizes, as Berkeley did not, the *independence of the external object*, viewed as

apart from the human mind, but not independent of the Creator's mind which founded all. Yet our minds though finite are *correlative* to God's mind and normally reflect it.

4. Bowne undertakes to fix the *concrete significance* of the formal laws of mind, the "categories" as concretely employed. And here he parts company with Kant. Bowne agrees with Kant's primal position that the "categories" (or the implicit formal relations to experience in all active rationality) are first immanent in the self-conscious *ego*. But he holds, as Kant does not, that the categories as mere *abstractions* have no existence; and that when this *ego* passes over to an experience of knowledge of the external world, there is *no mutilation* of the knowledge. This act of mind always has a *real*, though *limited*, value for finite intelligence. To that extent phenomenal knowledge *mediates* the so-called *noumenal*, and in so far one knows "the thing"—that something presupposed, by Kant,—even though it were among the *noumena* "as it is in itself."

5. The so-called *noumena* are purely *mythical*. If anything appears it must appear to *somebody*, that is, to a personality in whom the formal laws of thought immanently abide.

6. This "phenomenal knowledge," while always relative to finite beings, is yet *reliable* and dependable knowledge as far as it goes.

7. Our entire universe with its laws is consistently conceived when it assumes that there is an infinite Creator's thought and will at bottom, and all real being and causal energy are rooted in him.

Moreover, our rational natures are so *homogeneously related* to this absolute Being that our rationality posits God. We are at our best in knowledge when we think over again after him the thoughts of God. To this extent we really know God and his universe, both in things temporal and eternal.

8. All attempts to explain the universe on the *impersonal* plane are futile.

9. While this view accepts the verdict of Kant's Practical Reason, it reaches its conclusion in a different way. The testimony of reason, *embracing the whole man*—mental, affectional, moral, and volitional—concerning itself, is accepted. Eucken says this is "necessary for our own self-preservation." Then there is no ground left for any necessary skepticism of *such a reason*. The "faithful Creator" has wrought a truth and not a lie into our rational constitution.

10. In the attempt of the finite mind, with all its constitutive activity, to grasp the truth, this truth often takes on the *antithetic form*, as in the *paradoxes* of Christianity. This is because the deepest insights of reason are realities too deep for even our highest powers of natural, fallen rationality. These insights are obtained only by *living* the truths and principles involved. Then it is that the Holy Spirit of God takes up our case, and *discovers to us* the deeper divine secrets, and we "know," in the profound Biblical sense, things that are "hidden," as even Harnack says, "from the profane."* Both aspects of apparent contra-

* Matthew 16 : 17. See also 3 John, in which the phrase "we know," in this sense of knowledge, repeatedly occurs.

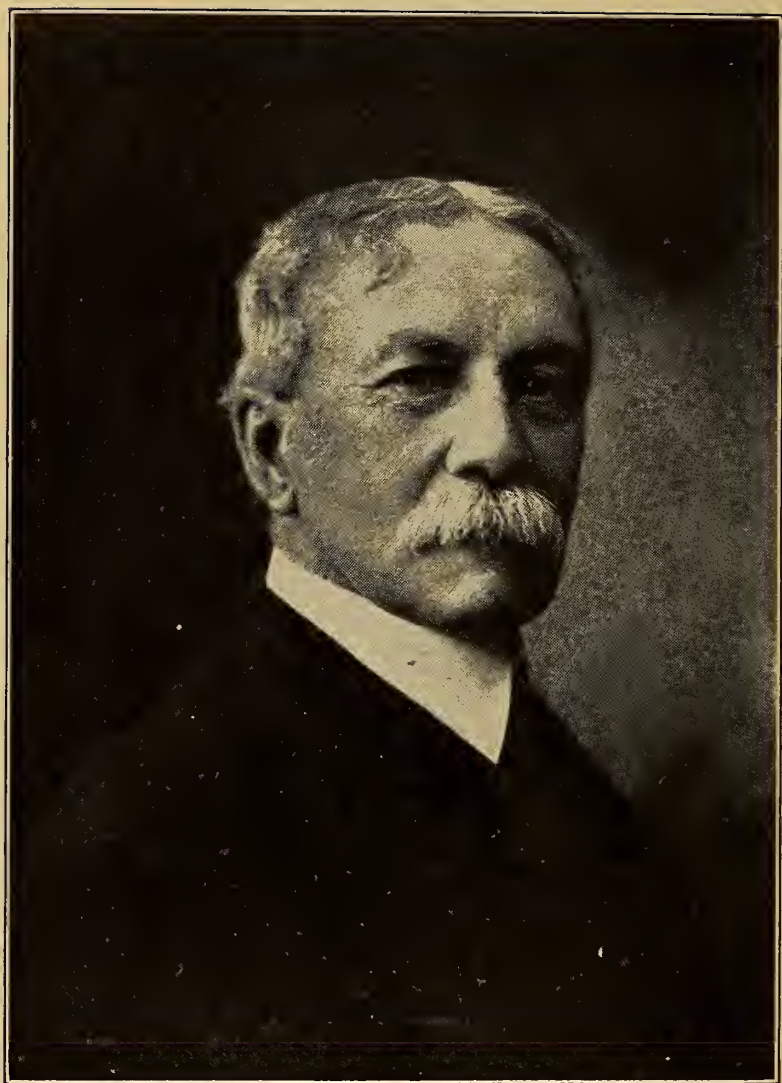
diction are thus shown to be true through the experience of "the willing-hearted"; and this kind of demonstration is ever growing.

II. The deep *speculative* significance for *freedom* is thus maintained — a freedom consistent also with divine sovereignty. We are saved, as one has said, "from a self-centered individualism into a God-centered personality." It is the unique distinction of personality in the ordinary sense, that it is able to think twice, to balance matters as a pair of scales never do, even to reverse a position, to institute a new initiative, and even *use* the so-called "fixities of nature" to reach a personal end, which no amount of mere law of itself could ever reach. An aviator does this, when he adapts his mechanical contrivance to gravitation in such a way as to produce its apparent opposite levitation. Personality thus *transcends*, rather than *violates*, mechanism. This in principle occurs in all miracle; and thereby disappears the most common objection to it.

Thus this form of Objective Idealism, rejecting the old sense-metaphysics, presents personality, as *actively building up* its own world of knowledge.

Moreover, the supposed foundation for philosophical agnosticism laid in Kant's unknowable "*noumena*" is swept aside. Man is created with a proper self-conscious self, — something which cannot be derived from the merely natural or animal, something above the culminating point of natural evolution (whatever it is), something belonging to the eternal, native to it; something which extends beyond the individual to the universal whole of .

things—yet not pantheistic—“a whole grounded in God, from whom it draws its credentials and power.” This life has a timeless depth in it; our personal life-process is centered in it, and on that ground it postulates the whole cosmic order.



PRESIDENT EMERITUS AUGUSTUS H. STRONG, ROCHESTER

VI

GROUNDS FOR GOD'S BEING, AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

BUT all this later Idealism described in the previous chapter is harmonious with — nay, presupposes — Deity. The primary theistic suggestion posits hypothetically that there is a Supreme Intellect behind the whole phenomenal system; that he manifests himself through it and ideally founds that objective unity of the system with which all our finite knowledge is congruous. This hypothesis has in it fewer difficulties than any other, and there is no *a priori* reason against it. The world originated in thought, and it expresses thought that is adapted to our thought; *i. e.*, God and his thought-universe are such objects as admit of *rational construction*; and so God and his thinking creature, man, are *homogeneous* with each other. In other words, rational thought implies the being of a personal God, and it is he who has put meanings for us into the whole phenomenal order. As we read a hieroglyph inscribed on a monument, find that we have the key also in ourselves, and discover a fixed meaning in it, so we perceive a *correspondence* between God and our phenomenal knowledge of him. We recognize that we belong to a thought-system, and a purposeful system, requiring a Deity as the founder of that system. Even David Strauss confessed that “the idea of God has its essential or potential ground in the

very constitution of the human mind, as native to it, but that this is brought out to consciousness by outward perceptions and experiences." The idea of God in our mind *ipso facto* involves its presumptive reality. Jacobi has said that "as man, in thinking God, *anthropo*-morphizes, *i. e.*, thinks of God in terms of man, so God in creating man *theo*-morphizes, *i. e.*, impresses the sense of his being upon the thought of man.

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'
The youth replies, 'I can.'"

A soul probably cannot be conscious of itself without being aware of some deep relation to an absolute Being, its originating Author. Says President Schurman: "The intuition of God is the logical *prius* of the consciousness of God and the world." A rational soul as it comes to full self-consciousness posits God, assumes God. It leaps as by a flash to the original cause. Hence it may be believed as many assert that a child does not need to be taught that there *is* a God, although it needs to be taught much *about* him. But the fact of another spiritual Being above him, accounting for him, and to whom he aspires, is *native* to all normal souls and even to the feeble-minded. It is said that, when Helen Keller was given her first formal lesson concerning God, she exclaimed, "Oh, I have always known *him*, but I never knew his *name* until now." "Thou, O God, hast made us for thyself." For this we are prepared by the very

intuitions of our personal selves. The ever-growing knowledge we acquire and exercise *presupposes a Deity* at the other end of the line.

When a wireless operator at sea communicates his thought to a distant ship or station, he does not, strictly speaking, “*send*” the message as one sends a letter by mail. He rather plays his part in the *use of a correspondence* which has previously been set up between his mind and another mind at a distance. In advance, it has been determined that certain waves of ether set vibrating in reasoned forms by the instrument of the “transmitter” shall be caught up through another instrument or “receiver” in the hands of a second party in such forms that *their meanings can be read*. Thus “deep calleth unto deep,” because the two deeps are there. So the deep of man’s intelligence corresponds to the deep of the divine reason, as realities *mutually related* to each other, and intended for each other. When the daisy lifts its head sunward it is because the sun is there. “An infant crying in the night” implies the day and the mother’s care. Here, then, is the deep basis for the fundamental teaching that religion presumes upon, and is built upon, — interaction between persons.

Professor Henry Devaux, an eminent teacher of natural science in Bordeaux University, France, spent an evening with me in Morges, Switzerland, a year or so since, giving me the story of his conversion, which occurred on a visit to Northfield about twenty-four years ago. Devaux, trained to processes of natural science, had long sought in the impersonal universe for evidence of God and immor-

tality, and especially since the death of his Christian father, to whom the thought of non-immortality was intolerable. It was at the end of the long search of the intellect and even of the exercise of conscience that he realized that he had to give himself by a *deliberate act of will*—in other words, to commit his entire being—to the hypothetical person of the Christ of the New Testament, if he was to find God experientially. Then it was that the light broke upon him, a light that has shone more and more as during the period since he has given himself throughout France to lecturing on the realms of science and religion, as parallel to each other, but in no real conflict.

One remarkable phenomenon in connection with the disclosure of Christ to Devaux was that he was instantly assured that his deceased father was alive, and he should again see him. Thus in his own soul “life and immortality were in one and the same moment both brought to light.”

The story of the return to faith of Professor G. J. Romanes, the English scientist—largely influenced by Dr. John T. Gulick, of Honolulu,—is to the same effect. When after long acquaintance and sympathetic work in the realm of the sciences, the one from the naturalistic point of view and the other from the theistic, Romanes finally wrote to Gulick asking how, while attaining to such eminence as a scientist, he and others like Lord Kelvin, Clerk Maxwell, and Professor Tait had retained their Christian faith, Gulick replied, “The fact is, Romanes, you are on the *wrong trail*.” You have been seeking for God through the application of

physical and material tests, but God is not thus found. Religion is the *response of a person to a person*, as a mother and her child mutually know each other. Christ *himself* and what he can prove himself to be to the human soul is the final evidence of Christianity.

Romanes then gave up his bootless attempt to find God in the realm of physics, and following the "*higher trail*" of personal relations—in its realm just as scientific as the other—returned to the Christ he had earlier known, and left on record a hearty testimony to the realities of the Christian experience.* He confessed that he had discovered that "*logical processes*" were "*not the only means of research in regions transcendental,*" and he began to speak of a "*new and short way with the agnostics.*"

Any naturalistic theory, therefore, which strikes at the organic, intuitive personality of man, which subordinates its significance as primary, or which represses moral interaction with God as posited, in so far *banishes* God from his universe; it also *vitiates the validity* of one's own knowing powers. The loss of this individual and corporate God-consciousness within the past generation is mainly due to naturalistic influences from false material philosophies, irrelevant or false to the experimental matter at stake.

* See his *Thoughts on Religion*.

VII

CONCLUSION

OF the two methods of solution now considered, the naturalistic and the idealistic, the former is no solution whatever. It leaves the universe where Haeckel leaves it, — an insoluble riddle. The latter presents at least *fewer difficulties* to rational thought; and it leaves us with a minimum of difficulties and a *working hypothesis*: that there is a light in which, if we walk, it will “shine more and more unto the perfect day.” This brings us straight to practical religion, something eternal as well as temporal. Professor James has said, at the conclusion of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*: “The visible world is part of a more spiritual universe, from which it draws its chief significance,” and that “union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end.”

Through union with this realm we are expected, aided by a higher superhuman power, to combat and overcome also all evils of the moral realm which threaten us. Thus a sound Idealism is our best basis — nay, our only one — intellectually speaking, for both the *existence* of God and the *validity of our knowledge* of him. It implies that our mind below *answers* to the divine mind above, and *vice versa*. These are two indivisible counterparts in one rational universe. If the Bible assumes all this, it is because it was first written in the constitution of man and the universe, a writing which the Book

echoes and which our growing experience ever re-echoes. Our world, because primarily a "thought-product," is a theistic world, and intended for our growing apprehension, holiness, service, and joy.

Moreover, many related truths, like freedom, the probability and nature of revelation, the legitimacy of the miraculous in a highly purposeful universe, and of the supernatural—even of the supernatural as the "higher natural," never any *violation* of the real sanctities of law, but rather a *transcendence* of law, if it be conceived as impersonal—and any true doctrine of prayer,—all these and many other truths are bound up with such a theism as we have endeavored to set forth. If we are to think at all, and especially with Him who said, "Come now, and let us reason together," let us think sanely, rationally, on all these things. For we must choose, as between what Bergson has called the "mechanization of mind" (now so manifest in the materialistic adaptations of science to the creation of engines of destruction) on the one side, the "force spread over the surface, which cannot repair itself, which exhausts itself," and on the other side "the spiritualization of matter," "life, power of creation, which makes and remakes itself at each instant, because it springs from deep roots," representative of civilization's higher order. Particularly, then, in view of the world-wide confusions and alienations threatening everything foundational, it seems indispensable that all Christian teachers and preachers should qualify as never before, to safeguard the unwary, in our families and schools, against becom-

ing enmeshed in the agnostic naturalism of the time. And in our methods of education it will make all difference whether we start our doctrine of world-building with molecules of matter or with the SELF-CONSCIOUS SOUL.

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